

**Clean Version of Amended Claims**

- 1    1. A method for automatically managing energy cost using metering data and pricing  
2    data comprising the steps of:
  - 3                 receiving metering data from a utility meter, wherein the metering data is  
4                 electronically transmitted from the utility meter;
  - 5                 receiving pricing data electronically over a network, wherein the pricing data  
6                 is associated with a plurality of sources of power;
  - 7                 forecasting a forecast load based on the received metering data from the utility  
8                 meter; and
  - 9                 determining an optimal consumption decision based on the received pricing  
10          data and the forecast load.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of delivering the optimal  
consumption decision to a customer.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the utility meter comprises an electric meter.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the utility meter comprises a gas meter.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the utility meter comprises a water meter.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein the metering data is electronically transmitted from  
the utility meter via a telephone line.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the pricing data includes grid price point data,  
distributed generation price point data, demand-side management price point data and  
alternative fuel price point data.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the network is the Internet.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising determining a price baseline for at least one of the plurality of the sources of power, as a function of the forecast load and of price point data for the at least one of the plurality of sources of power.
- 1 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising determining a price baseline for a combination of one or more of the sources of power, wherein the price baseline is determined by price point data for the one or more sources of power, the forecast load and a percentage of the forecast load which will be met by each of the one or more sources of power.
- 2 11. The method of claim 1, wherein the forecasting step further comprises receiving weather data and forecasting a forecast load based on the received metering data from the utility meter and the weather data.
- 3 12. The method of claim 1, wherein the determining step further comprises receiving financial market data and determining an optimal consumption decision based on the received pricing data, the forecast load and the financial market data.
- 4 13. The method of claim 10, wherein the additional forecasting data is received via the Internet.
- 5 14. The method of claim 10, wherein the optimal consumption decision is further based, in part, on the additional forecasting data.
15. The method of claim 1, wherein the determining an optimal consumption decision includes calculating an optimal cost curve.
16. The method of claim 15, wherein the calculating an optimal cost curve includes applying an optimization algorithm to the pricing data and the forecast load.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the optimal consumption decision is delivered to the customer via the Internet.
  18. The method of claim 1, further including allowing the customer to choose to receive power from one or more of the plurality of sources of power.
  19. The method of claim 1, further including electronically delivering a bill for power from one or more utilities to the customer.
  20. The method of claim 19, further including allowing the customer to pay the bill electronically.
  21. The method of claim 1, further including automatically implementing the optimal consumption decision, wherein the automatically implementing includes automatically providing power from one or more of the plurality of sources of power to the customer based upon the optimal consumption decision.
- 1    22. A system for automatically managing energy cost using metering data and pricing data, the system comprising:
- 3                at least one utility meter for recording and transmitting the metering data;
- 4                at least one server; and
- 5                a network,
- 6                wherein the at least one server is configured to receive the metering data from the at least one utility meter, to receive the pricing data from the network, to determine an optimal consumption decision and to transmit the optimal consumption decision to a customer.
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23. The system of claim 22, wherein the at least one utility meter includes an electric meter.

24. The system of claim 22, wherein the at least one utility meter includes a gas meter.
25. The system of claim 22, wherein the at least one utility meter includes a water meter.
26. The system of claim 22, wherein the at least one utility meter is configured to transmit the metering data to the server via a telephone line.
27. The system of claim 22, wherein the at least one server comprises at least one central server and at least one regional server.
28. The system of claim 27, wherein the at least one central server is configured to receive the pricing data from the network, receive the metering data from the at least one regional server, determine the optimal consumption decision and transmit the optimal consumption decision to the at least one regional server.  
1   29. The system of claim 27, wherein the at least one regional server is configured to  
2   receive the metering data from the at least one utility meter, transmit the metering  
3   data to the at least one central server, receive the optimal consumption decision from  
4   the at least one central server and transmit the optimal consumption decision to the  
5   customer.
30. The system of claim 22, wherein the network comprises the Internet.
31. The system of claim 22, wherein the network comprises a wide area network.